Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Withdrawn) A composition for forming a microporous ceramic material comprising:

a metal silicon powder, and at least one nonoxide ceramic powder selected from the group consisting of a silicon nitride powder and a silicon carbide powder,

wherein a mixing ratio of the metal silicon powder and the nonoxide ceramic powder is 5 parts or more and less than 60 parts of the metal silicon powder with respect to 100 parts of the nonoxide ceramic powder in a mass ratio.

2. (Withdrawn) The composition according to claim 1, wherein a mixing ratio of the metal silicon powder and the nonoxide ceramic powder is 25 parts or more and less than 45 parts of the metal silicon powder with respect to 100 parts of the nonoxide ceramic powder in a mass ratio.

3. (Withdrawn) The composition according to claim 1, wherein an average particle size of the metal silicon powder and the nonoxide ceramic powder is in a range from 1 μm or more and less than 50 μm.

4. (Withdrawn) The composition according to claim 1, comprising a dispersion medium that disperses the metal silicon powder and the nonoxide ceramic powder.

5. (Withdrawn) A composition for forming a microporous ceramic material comprising:

a metal silicon powder, at least one nonoxide ceramic powder selected from the group consisting of a silicon nitride powder and a silicon carbide powder, and at least one oxide powder selected from the group consisting of a yttrium oxide powder and an aluminum oxide powder,

wherein a mixing ratio of the metal silicon powder and the nonoxide ceramic powder is 10 parts or more and less than 100 parts of the metal silicon powder with respect to 100 parts of the nonoxide ceramic powder in a mass ratio, and

the content of the oxide powder is an amount corresponding to 2 mass % or more and less than 250 mass% of the content of the metal silicon powder and not more than 20 mass% of the total amount of the metal silicon powder, the nonoxide ceramic powder and the oxide powder.

6. (Withdrawn) The composition according to claim 5, wherein a mixing ratio of the metal silicon powder and the nonoxide ceramic powder is 20 parts or more and less than 90 parts of the metal silicon powder with respect to 100 parts of the nonoxide ceramic powder in a mass ratio.

7. (Withdrawn) The composition according to claim 5, wherein an average particle size of each of the metal silicon powder and the nonoxide ceramic powder is in a range from 1 μm or more and less than 50 μm.

8. (Withdrawn) The composition according to claim 5, wherein an average particle size of the oxide powder is in a range from 0.1 μm or more and less than 1 μm.

9. (Withdrawn) The composition according to claim 5, comprising a dispersion medium that disperses the metal silicon powder, the nonoxide ceramic powder and the oxide powder.

10.-13. (Cancelled)

14. (Currently Amended) A method for making a microporous ceramic material <u>having an average micropore size in the range from 0.8 μm to 1.2 μm and a porosity in the range from 35 vol% to 40 vol% used as a substrate of a ceramic membrane used for gas separation</u>~~consisting essentially of nonoxide ceramic~~, the method comprising:

preparing a composition consisting essentially of a metal silicon powder, ~~at least one nonoxide ceramic powder selected from the group consisting of~~ a silicon nitride powder ~~and a silicon carbide powder~~, and both a yttrium oxide powder and an aluminum oxide powder as oxide powders such that a molar ratio of the yttrium oxide to the aluminum oxide is in a range of from about 0.8 to 1.2, wherein a mixing ratio of the metal silicon powder and the ~~nonoxide ceramic~~ silicon nitride powder is 10 parts or more, but less than 100 parts, of the metal silicon powder with respect to 100 parts of a total amount of the ~~nonoxide ceramic~~ silicon nitride powder in a mass ratio, and the content of the oxide powders is an amount corresponding to 2 mass% or more, but less than 250 mass%, of the content of the metal silicon powder, and not more than 20 mass% of the total amount of the metal silicon powder, the ~~nonoxide ceramic~~ silicon nitride powder and the oxide powders, and an average particle size of each of the metal silicon powder and the ~~nonoxide ceramic~~ silicon nitride powder contained in the composition is in a range from 1 μm to 50 μm,

molding the composition into a molded product, and

subjecting the molded product to reaction sintering in an atmosphere that allows nitriding and in a temperature range ~~that allows nitriding~~ from 1200°C to 1500°C for two hours or more, but less than 12 hours, wherein the reaction sintering is performed as follows:

heating the molded product in the atmosphere from room temperature to 700°C or more, but less than 900°C at a temperature increase rate of 2°C/min or more, but less than 10°C/min;

further heating the product in the atmosphere to 1200°C or more, but less than 1500°C at a temperature increase rate of 1°C/min or more, but less than 5°C/min; and thereafter

storing the sintered product in the atmosphere in said temperature range.

15. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 14, wherein a mixing ratio of the metal silicon powder and the ~~nonoxide ceramic~~ silicon nitride powder in the composition is 20 parts or more, but less than 90 parts, of the metal silicon powder with respect to 100 parts of the total amount of the ~~nonoxide ceramic~~ silicon nitride powder in a mass ratio.

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 14, wherein an average particle size of the oxide ceramic powder contained in the composition is 0.1 μm or more, but less than 1 μm.

18. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 14, wherein the composition is molded under pressure at a molding pressure set at 30 MPa or more, but less than 200 MPa, in the molding process.

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Withdrawn) A microporous ceramic material made by the method according to claim 14.

21. (New) The method according to claim 14, wherein the molar ratio of the yttrium oxide and the aluminum oxide (Y_2O_3/Al_2O_3) is in the range from 0.9 to 1.1.